



Newspaper editorial pages—both in print and online—are highly popular among readers. Op-eds are longer than letters to the editor and afford the opportunity to delve more deeply into issues. An op-ed is your chance to influence opinions, affect policy, and highlight the work you or your organization is doing to support crime victims' rights. One way to develop an op-ed is to research local crime coverage and important issues in your community. For example, how are the universities and colleges in your area responding to sexual assault? Does your community offer services for victims of human trafficking? How would a partnership between law enforcement and victim service agencies benefit your community? Use or adapt the sample op-ed on the following page or craft your own to highlight an issue local to your community.

» 5 Elements of an Attention-Grabbing Op-Ed

- Be persuasive. Include the latest research and structure a logical argument or rationale.
- Be confident. You are the expert in this field.
- Stay current on related events and the cultural conversation about them.
- Use plain language that can be read and understood by a wide audience.
- Keep your submission to 800 words or less.



Sample Op-Ed Column

Employers Should Empower Victims of Violence in the Workplace

Most people never anticipate being injured or killed at work due to violence. While companies generally review workplace violence and harassment policies with new employees, these policies are rarely revisited, leaving many organizations vulnerable to victimization by employees, their family or friends, and customers.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) defines workplace violence as “any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening or disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site.” Risk factors for violence include working with volatile and unstable people; working in an isolated location, or where alcohol is served; exchanging money with the public; and providing services and care.

However, this list does not include domestic violence. According to OSHA, 8.6 percent of workplace fatalities in 2015 were homicides. Of those, 43 percent were female employees killed by a male relative or domestic partner, while 2 percent of male employees were killed by a female relative or domestic partner. These statistics highlight the strong correlation between domestic violence and workplace violence.

Contrary to popular belief, domestic violence does not take place solely in the home. Victims of domestic violence may receive repeated text messages, emails, and phone calls throughout the day from the perpetrator. Some perpetrators may drive by the office location several times while victims are at work. Others will attempt to control victims by demanding they call in sick or quit their job. Employees may be under incredible pressure not only to perform well at their job, but also to meet the demands of a perpetrator. Should the perpetrator’s behavior escalate, both victims and their coworkers may be at increased risk for injury or death.

Research by the Society for Human Resource Management found that 65 percent of companies do not have a domestic violence policy and only 20 percent provide some type of training related to domestic violence. This gap creates uncertainty for victims who may wish to leave a violent relationship. Victims have no way of knowing if their employers will allow them to take time off for court dates or counseling, or if the employers will accommodate changes to their work schedule, phone number, or branch location. Victims may fear that even asking for these accommodations will cost them their job.

Companies can remove this employment uncertainty from the numerous barriers victims of domestic violence face. Every workplace should have a domestic violence policy that clearly states reasonable accommodations will be made and provides concrete examples, such as the ability for employees to use paid leave on short notice for reasons related to domestic violence, and protection of employees’ privacy, including their whereabouts, contact information, and status as a victim. In addition, employers should work to decrease the stigma surrounding domestic violence by providing training and distributing community resources annually to their employees. When workplaces invest in the well-being of their employees, it expands the opportunity for victims to disclose their victimization, connect with services, and receive the support they need.

